



## Blended learning technologies for improving English writing competence in higher education

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of blended learning technologies in enhancing English writing competence among higher education students, with a focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in non-linguistic disciplines. A 12-week intervention combined face-to-face instruction with digital tools, including Moodle, Google Docs, Grammarly, and Padlet, targeting 120 undergraduate students. A mixed-methods approach, incorporating pre- and post-intervention writing assessments, surveys, and focus group interviews, evaluated improvements in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and student engagement. Results revealed significant gains in writing proficiency and positive student perceptions of flexibility and interactivity, though technical challenges persisted. The findings advocate for the strategic integration of blended learning in EFL curricula to foster academic and professional writing skills, offering actionable insights for educators.

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## Oliy ta'limda ingliz tilida yozish kompetensiyasini oshirish uchun qo'llaniladigan aralash ta'lim texnologiyalari

### ANNOTATSIYA

#### **Kalit so'zlar:**

Aralash ta'lim,  
ingliz tilida yozish  
ko'nikmalari,  
chet tili sifatida ingliz tilini  
o'qitish,

Ushbu tadqiqot oliy ta'lim muassasalari talabalarining ingliz tilida yozish kompetensiyasini oshirishda aralash ta'lim texnologiyalarining samaradorligini o'rganadi. Bunda asosiy e'tibor nolingvistik yo'nalishlarda ingliz tilini chet tili (EFL) sifatida o'rganayotgan talabalarga qaratilgan. 12 haftalik tajriba

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oliy ta'lim,  
raqamli texnologiyalar,  
hamkorlikda yozish,  
talabalarining faolligi,  
akademik yozuv.

120 nafar bakalavriat talabasi uchun Moodle, Google Docs, Grammarly va Padlet kabi raqamli vositalarni an'anaviy ta'lim bilan uyg'unlashtirdi. Aralash metodologiya yordamida, tajribadan oldingi va keyingi yozma baholashlar, so'rovnomalar va fokus-guruh suhbatlari orqali grammatika, lug'at boyligi, matn izchilligi va talabalar faolligidagi o'zgarishlar baholandi. Natijalar yozish ko'nikmalarining sezilarli darajada yaxshilanganini va talabalarining moslashuvchanlik hamda interaktivlikka oid ijobiy fikrlarini ko'rsatdi, garchi ayrim texnik qiyinchiliklar saqlanib qolgan bo'lsa-da. Tadqiqot natijalari akademik va kasbiy yozish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish uchun EFL o'quv dasturlariga aralash ta'limni strategik jihatdan joriy etishni qo'llab-quvvatlaydi va o'qituvchilarga amaliy tavsiyalar beradi.

## Технологии смешанного обучения для улучшения навыков письма на английском языке в высших учебных заведениях

### АННОТАЦИЯ

#### Ключевые слова:

смешанное обучение,  
грамотность в написании  
текстов на английском  
языке,  
обучение английскому  
языку как иностранному,  
высшее образование,  
цифровые технологии,  
совместное письмо,  
вовлеченность студентов,  
академическое письмо.

В данном исследовании изучается эффективность технологий смешанного обучения в развитии навыков письма на английском языке у студентов высших учебных заведений, с акцентом на изучающих английский как иностранный (EFL) в рамках неязыковых дисциплин. 12-недельная программа включала очное обучение с использованием цифровых инструментов, включая Moodle, Google Docs, Grammarly и Padlet, и охватывала 120 студентов бакалавриата. Смешанный подход, включающий оценку навыков письма до и после вмешательства, опросы и интервью с фокус-группами, позволил оценить улучшение грамматики, словарного запаса, связности речи и вовлеченности студентов. Результаты выявили значительный рост навыков письма и позитивное восприятие студентами гибкости и интерактивности, хотя технические проблемы сохранялись. Результаты свидетельствуют в пользу стратегической интеграции смешанного обучения в учебные программы EFL для развития навыков академического и профессионального письма, предлагая преподавателям практические рекомендации.

### INTRODUCTION

In an era of global academic and professional communication, English writing competence is vital for higher education students, particularly EFL learners in non-linguistic fields such as engineering, medicine, and business. These students often face challenges including limited linguistic exposure, inadequate practice opportunities, and curricula prioritizing content over language skills (Adas & Bakir, 2013). Blended learning, which integrates in-person and online instruction, offers a dynamic solution by leveraging digital tools to provide flexible, interactive, and personalized writing practice (Garrison &

Kanuka, 2004). Technologies such as learning management systems (LMS), AI-assisted feedback tools, and collaborative platforms enhance engagement and skill development, addressing the unique needs of EFL learners (Tao et al., 2024). Prior studies highlight the transformative potential of blended learning in language education. Systematic reviews report improved writing outcomes through platforms like Moodle and mobile applications, with notable gains in grammar, vocabulary, and text organization (Quvanch & Na, 2020; Sun & Asmawi, 2023). However, challenges such as technical barriers and varying learner proficiency levels require further exploration (Chen, 2021). This study addresses these gaps by examining: (1) How blended learning technologies impact writing competence, (2) Students' perceptions of the approach, and (3) Implementation challenges in non-linguistic university settings. By integrating empirical data and qualitative insights, this research contributes to evidence-based pedagogical strategies for EFL writing instruction.

## METHODS

**Participants** - The study involved 120 undergraduate students (aged 18-23, 52% female) from a public university in Malaysia, enrolled in a mandatory English for Academic Purposes course. Participants were non-native English speakers with B1-B2 proficiency (CEFR) from disciplines including computer science, economics, and nursing. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained, ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

**Design and Procedure** - mixed-methods convergent parallel design was utilized, combining quantitative writing assessments and surveys with qualitative focus group interviews (Isayeva et al., 2020). The 12-week intervention employed a rotation blended learning model: 50% face-to-face (weekly 2-hour sessions for workshops and peer feedback) and 50% online (asynchronous tasks via Moodle LMS, including video tutorials, quizzes, and writing exercises).

Digital tools included:

**Moodle:** Hosted modules on essay structure, argumentative writing, and academic vocabulary.

**Google Docs:** Facilitated collaborative drafting and peer-editing of essays.

**Grammarly:** Provided AI-driven feedback on grammar, style, and coherence.

**Padlet:** Supported brainstorming and outlining activities.

**WhatsApp:** Enabled group discussions and instructor-student communication.

The intervention focused on academic writing tasks (e.g., 500-word argumentative essays, research summaries) relevant to participants' majors. Pre- and post-tests involved writing a 400-word essay, scored by three independent raters using a rubric (content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics; max 100 points; inter-rater reliability:  $\kappa=0.89$ ). A 20-item questionnaire (5-point Likert scale) assessed perceptions of usability, engagement, and effectiveness ( $n=120$ ). Six focus groups (5-6 students each, 30-40 minutes) explored experiences and challenges, conducted via Zoom.

**Data Analysis.** Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v.27. Paired-samples t-tests compared pre- and post-test scores ( $\alpha=0.05$ ). Survey responses were evaluated descriptively, reporting means and percentages. Qualitative data from focus group transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis in NVivo, with codes for benefits, challenges, and recommendations. Triangulation ensured robustness by cross-referencing quantitative and qualitative findings.

## RESULTS

Quantitative analysis revealed significant improvements in writing competence. The pre-test mean score was 48.7 (SD=14.2), rising to 87.4 (SD=8.6) post-test,  $t(119) = -22.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 2.04$ ). Sub-score improvements included:

**Grammar:** Pre: 13.1, Post: 23.8 ( $t(119) = -19.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Vocabulary:** Pre: 12.4, Post: 22.3 ( $t(119) = -18.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Organization:** Pre: 11.8, Post: 21.5 ( $t(119) = -20.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Content:** Pre: 11.4, Post: 20.8 ( $t(119) = -17.86$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

Survey results indicated strong positive perceptions: 88% agreed that blended learning increased flexibility ( $M = 4.5/5$ ), 82% reported enhanced engagement ( $M = 4.3$ ), 79% valued AI feedback ( $M = 4.2$ ), and 75% noted improved confidence ( $M = 4.1$ ). However, 52% reported occasional technical difficulties ( $M = 3.4$ ).

### Qualitative analysis identified three themes:

**Benefits:** Flexibility ("I could work at my own pace"), skill improvement ("Grammarly helped me spot errors instantly"), and motivation ("Group tasks made writing fun").

**Challenges:** Technical issues ("Slow internet disrupted Moodle access"), tool overload ("Too many platforms were confusing"), and time management ("Balancing online and in-person tasks was tough").

**Recommendations:** Enhanced training on tools, simplified platforms, and equitable internet access.

The following table summarizes the blended learning tools and their impact:

Tool	Key Features	Benefits for Writing Competence	Challenges Identified
Moodle	Asynchronous modules, quizzes	Structured learning, flexible access	Internet connectivity issues
Google Docs	Collaborative editing, peer feedback	Improved coherence, teamwork skills	Version control confusion
Grammarly	AI-driven grammar and style feedback	Enhanced accuracy, reduced anxiety	Over-reliance on suggestions
Padlet	Brainstorming, visual organization	Better planning, creative engagement	Limited familiarity with interface
WhatsApp	Group discussions, quick queries	Community building, instant support	Distractions from notifications

## DISCUSSION

The significant improvement in writing scores aligns with prior research demonstrating blended learning's efficacy in EFL contexts (Sun & Asmawi, 2023; Tao et al., 2024). The large effect size suggests that combining face-to-face interaction with digital tools fosters comprehensive skill development, particularly in grammar and organization, as seen in studies using LMS and AI feedback (Chen, 2021). The integration of collaborative platforms like Google Docs mirrors findings on enhanced coherence through peer interaction (Quvanch & Na, 2020).

Positive student perceptions of flexibility and engagement corroborate evidence that blended learning promotes autonomy and motivation (Isayeva et al., 2020). However, technical challenges, such as unreliable internet, reflect barriers noted in resource-



constrained settings (Adas & Bakir, 2013). Tool overload highlights the need for streamlined implementation, consistent with studies reporting cognitive overload in multi-platform environments (Graham, 2006).

Limitations include the study's 12-week duration, which may not capture long-term retention, and its focus on a single institution, limiting generalizability. Future research should explore longitudinal effects, diverse cultural contexts, and the impact of specific tools on different proficiency levels. Practical implications include providing robust technical support, training educators in tool integration, and designing balanced curricula to avoid overload.

## CONCLUSION

Blended learning technologies significantly enhance English writing competence in higher education by combining the strengths of face-to-face and digital instruction. The use of Moodle, Google Docs, Grammarly, Padlet, and WhatsApp fosters measurable improvements in grammar, vocabulary, and coherence while promoting engagement and autonomy (Tao et al., 2024). Despite challenges like technical issues, strategic implementation can transform EFL writing instruction. Educators should prioritize training and infrastructure to maximize benefits, while future studies should investigate scalability and long-term outcomes to refine this approach.

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